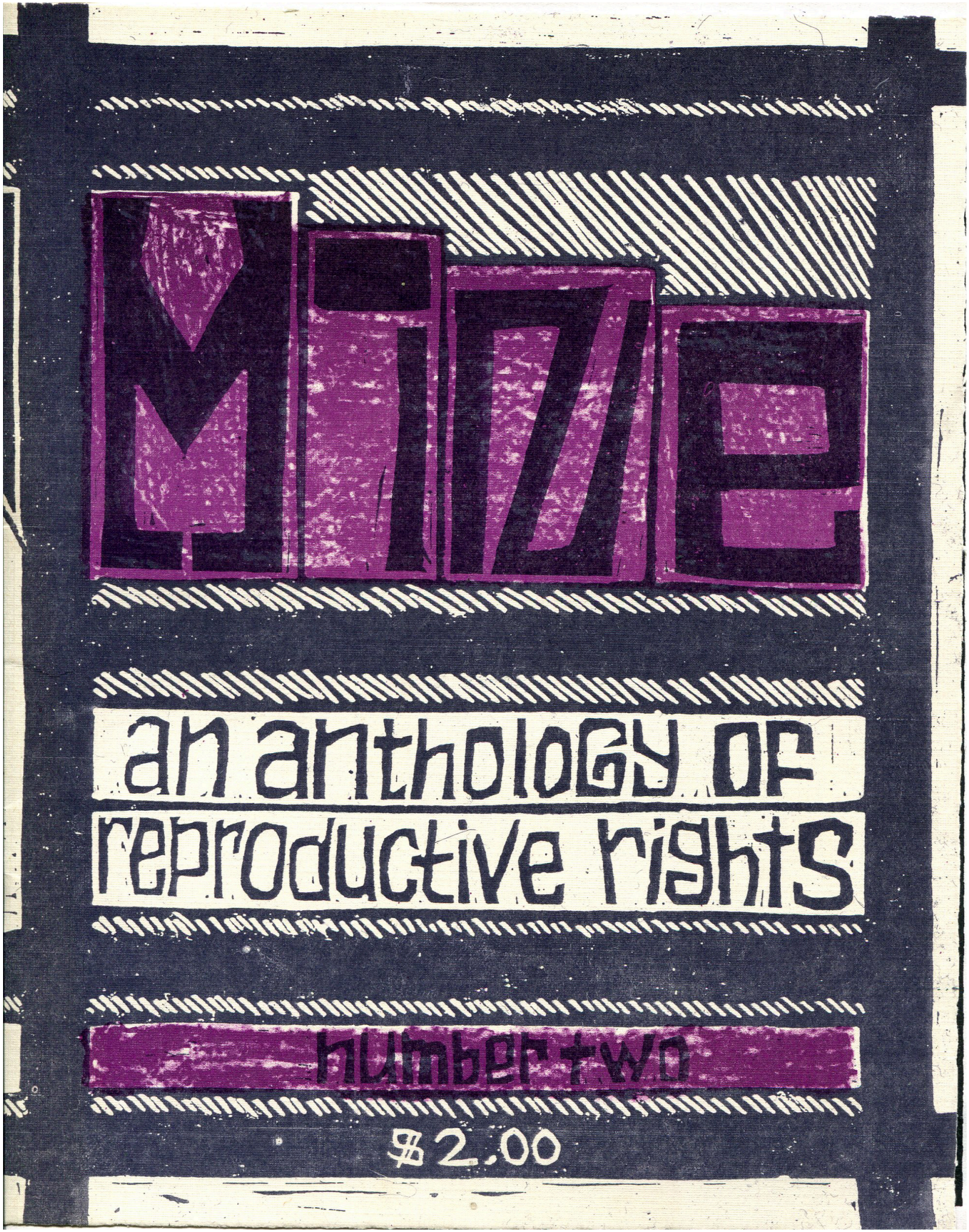
MIZE
an anthology of
reproductive rights
number two
$2.00

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I'M LOOKING FOR STORIES WITH A BELIEF IN OUR RIGHTS TO OUR BODIES. NOT ANTI-CHOICE.
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Mine: an Anthology of Reproductive Rights

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Introduction

Since I began this project two years ago I have become better informed on the complexities of reproductive rights. The first issue of this zine included a vast range of stories. But in general, they were written by young, white women from middle class families. I am still just beginning to learn about the complex ways that people of color, poor women, and queer and trans-gendered women have been and are systematically denied the choices, and rights, women with privileges like myself have. I would love to see this project grow and include stories from people who are usually forgotten by the pro-choice movement. Hopefully, with patience and dedication, this project, and more importantly, the reproductive rights movement overall, will actively include the voices of people who lack power; from women in prison, poor women, and everyone else denied real rights and choices. I would like this collection to grow to include stories of women forcibly sterilized, denied access to abortions while incarcerated, forced to give birth in shackles, forced to test new contraceptive methods, and the multitude of other women whose experiences do not get enough attention in the reproductive rights movement. We must focus on fighting not just for choices but for our rights to our bodies, as right is something that we are justified, and a choice means having the privilege to exercise discrimination in the market place. Talking about our bodies as though we have choices allows a judgement that there are good and bad choices, and therefore the state or federal government may have an interest in controlling them.

The first edition of this zine is still available, and has a variety of stories all involving herbal or clinical abortion. When I began this project, I felt that it was important to work on a project that would collect stories from people who had had abortions, to try to de-stigmatize the issue and connect us together so we could support each other. I also hoped that people who lacked personal experience would begin to gain knowledge of the complexities of reproductive rights. I believe that this project is just a beginning, a modest attempt, and many books have already been written and research collected which go far deeper into the issues. Some of these books and resources are listed in this zine. I want this project to expand people's knowledge about the multitude of issues and circumstances surrounding our bodies, and allow people to realize that creating legislation to determine when and how we can reproduce denies women a right to self- determination. I also want for this project to connect emotions and experiences to these issues so that we all gain a greater, more personal understanding of the challenges women face when trying to exert control over our bodies. I believe in abortion as a right

and on demand, and that any attempts at taking away freedoms or limiting access to personal reproductive rights, from governmental regulation or individual intervention, must be fought. I believe that those of us with privilege and/or political power must be committed to take risks and use that privilege towards bettering reproductive rights for all women. We must, however, be careful not to dominate the discussions. Women of all backgrounds have historically and currently been organizing, but often upper class white women disregard their issues and experiences. Many white women may have no personal experience or know anyone who has been forcibly sterilized or denied reproductive rights while incarcerated. It is not our place to determine the needs for people whose experiences we do not share. But we can attempt to support one another and work towards building alliances with other groups working on similar issues.

Abortion and contraception have been legal for most of American history. Beginning in 1873, governmental restrictions and cultural and religious censure have focused on controlling reproductive rights for women. Crocodile dung and honey were used historically as sperm inhibitors, and coitus interruptus has been a long standing tradition as birth control in all historic cultures. Women had herbal and mechanical abortions. However, as women ceased to be midwives and the medical profession came to dominate reproductive health care, and as abortion and contraceptives became illegal, women lost our control over reproduction. We must work to build networks once again, and try to help each other to learn about our bodies and options. But I also believe that herbal contraceptives and abortifacients are dangerous and most people who try them do not understand dosage amounts or have herbs strong enough to work. They are time consuming, highly taxing on the body and mind because they are poisons. I do believe we must work towards sharing knowledge among women and to not completely rely on the medical establishment for all of our health information. But another reality is that most women will not have the time, resources, a community of women, or access to information. So, we have to fight to maintain our rights to adequate and affordable health care, access to contraceptives, abortion, and child care; and all our reproductive needs. This project will continue in some form, and I can be emailed at merrydef@yahoo.com for additional copies, distribution and idea sharing.

-Meredith Stern

Currently I can be reached at: P.O. box 7466 Philadelphia, Pa 19101 for anyone without internet access. Copies are $3.00 postpaid (get in touch for better distribution rates for 10 or more copies), or free to women in prison or groups who work with incarcerated women.

Enjoy, thanks for reading! Thank you to Icky A, Ariel Clemenzi, and Brice White for editing assistance and inspiration!

Sha'an Mouliert

I'm Sha'an Mouliert. I'm 53 years old, of mixed ancestry and originally from New York City. For the past 18 years I've lived in Vermont. I'm currently the mother of a 20 year- old adopted son and I have a grandson. I had my first abortion when I was 15 years old, it was about the end of 1963, around September. I was in 10th grade when I got pregnant and at the time I thought I was going to take care of it myself. I even researched a home for unwed mothers. I went there several times. My plan was to disappear from my family. My mother realized I was pregnant because I was walking around the house with slips and my stomach was growing. She asked me if I was pregnant and, of course, I denied it. I had my friends give me their dirty sanitary napkins to put in the garbage as evidence I wasn't pregnant. But one time, my mother felt my stomach and it was definitely hard. At the time, she was fairly understanding and there was no doubt I was getting an abortion.

The unwed mother's home failed because they needed to see my mother, and my plan had been to disappear; for them never to see me again. My mother took me to have an abortion. It was illegal at the time, although, she had had several abortions. We knew it was illegal, but also that it was something that women did anyway. My mother recognized the woman who lived in the apartment where the abortion was performed as someone from her past. That seemed to trigger immense shame, that her 15 year- old daughter was pregnant.

I guess it was one of the safer kinds of abortions, although, I had never had an OB/GYN internal examination. The woman put forceps into my vagina and opened them up. Then she inserted a long 3-4 foot rubber tube with a hole at each end. Inside was a coat hanger to give it stability. She moved it up into the womb and once air got in the womb the fetus would drop. My mother, who was an alcoholic, decided after we left to buy me a fifth of gin to help with the pain. I didn't drink gin at this age, but I might have had a shot glass of it.

I was on the toilet when the fetus dropped. We lived in a four room apartment and only had one toilet. I sat there with the fetus hanging out of me for about 14 hours. Anytime someone needed to use the toilet I had to pull the fetus up by the umbilical cord. I knew it was a boy. He was about 3 ½ months old. So there I am, on the toilet and my mother is drunk. Finally, because she hadn't gone to work, her boss called up and asked

what happened. Her boss told her I should get to a hospital. She called an ambulance. Because of the shame, my mother told me to tell everyone I had a vitamin deficiency. All the way in the ambulance my mother is screaming in my ear, because she is drunk, "Don't tell them you had an abortion. You fell down the stairs." At the hospital, I am crying on the gurney mortified. The nurse asks me what is wrong; it was obvious how I was feeling, and I said, "My mother is drunk." The nurse said, "Well what do you expect with someone in your condition." All of the shame, between my mother's drunkenness and being judged for what I did, fell on me. The ideal of being a virgin before marriage was the bullshit she told us. She, also, stated with this kind of abortion no one could tell I'd gotten pregnant. I was surrounded by the myth of patriarchy.

At 16, I was pregnant again and that one went to term. I actually used the home for unwed mothers. By this time, I am a two bit whore to my family. Nobody is speaking to me. The horrible thing was being at the dinner table one evening and my sister called me a two bit whore. I didn't know what two bits were. I knew what a whore was. My brother, the youngest in the family was empathetic; it's curious, he is gay and I don't know if he was sympathetic for also being different or if he liked me better. If it hadn't been for him, I don't know if I could have proceeded. In January, I delivered a boy whom I surrendered for adoption. I later discovered he had fetal alcohol syndrome and was severely retarded. The last time I saw him, he was 14 years old living with a foster family attending a special needs school. When I knew I was going to have the baby, I broke down and cried. My mother explained that she had done the same with her first birth, me. Crying was a normal thing. Well, all the sympathy went away with the next pregnancy.

In April 1966 I got pregnant for the third time. We had sex twice that night and I used a condom the first time. I'd never thought about condoms before but after two pregnancies I was more astute. So I had a condom. The second time we had sex, we didn't have a condom and boom I'm pregnant again. By this time I was a senior in high school, and I "knew what I was doing."

Two of my friends at the time were also pregnant and we decided to ask the ouija board if we would have our babies or not. The board said they would, however, I wouldn't. I knew how to manipulate a board but I decided not to then because I was curious. The board said I would get help; it spelled out the name of a boy and that he would give me money. I decided to help the ouija board along and I called him up, although, I hadn't talked to him in two years. His mother informed me he was attending a school in Florida. After that, I'd forgotten all about him. When he returned from school 6 weeks later, he called me. When he saw me, the first thing he asked was if I was pregnant. My normal response was to say no, denial is an incredible thing. For whatever

reason, I replied yes. Maybe it was because of the ouija board. He wanted to know if I wanted an abortion and I said yes. First, we tried several herbs and nothing happened. So I went for an abortion. This was definitely not as nice as the first place. It was actually dark and dingy and scary. I think I went alone. It was the same kind of abortion. Again, the fetus dropped and this time I cut the umbilical cord and got rid of it. That one was a girl. I always waited to abort as late as possible. How dangerous! Again this was illegal. I kept the afterbirth in me for four days. My friend told me I had to go to a hospital and because of my shame I didn't want to go to my local hospital. Instead, I went to a hospital close to where my friend lived. While being examined, the doctor inquired if I had had an abortion and he told me he wouldn't report me to the authorities if I was honest, so I told him. The irony is they transferred me to my local hospital anyway. Again, there was all of the shame. I was in a ward with three other women who also needed D & C's because of illegal abortions. They were all white women who had gone to Puerto Rico. I had gone up to Harlem to get mine. That is when my mother found out I was pregnant. It was a done deal, nothing left to be said.

That last abortion caused me to be infertile. I had felt ok; I kept having sex and I wasn't using any protection. I thought it was great and I wasn't getting pregnant. Then I wanted to get pregnant and I found out I had "inflamed tubes". I didn't realize that it causes scar tissue and blockage. I couldn't have children, even though I had an operation to open up my tubes.

What I found curious is that my last abortion was in 1966. A few years later, my sister who was 20 at the time had an abortion in a hospital, a medical procedure, where people come to visit you, no one is demeaning towards you, the staff cares about your mental and physical needs. The difference was so palatable for me. If nothing else, thank goodness for Roe v. Wade.

In the beginning, it was almost uncomfortable to discuss because there were so many years of illegal abortion. To talk about it now is a curious thing. In my area of Vermont, it's very conservative so there are pickets at the Planned Parenthood. Even when I deal with clients in Social Services I hear how 14 year old girls are having abortions at the local hospital. On one hand the stigma is gone but there is a backlash too.

The question for me regarding access is who are we taking it away from. People with means and resources always have and always will have abortions. I think about me trying herbs and how (women) lost the herbs and recipes. For centuries, women had been using them for birth control. We discovered how not to have children. I look at some of the hallmarks of patriarchy and one of the most majors is controlling population functions.

When I adopted my son I felt like I'd made a complete circle. I am definitely pro-choice, but there have been a few times when I advocated for abortion such as if a mother/parent seems incapable of raising a child. I really believe it is a personal choice and an informed decision needs to be made. The fact that today you are able to take a pill after sex is a miracle. Abortion is a really hot topic for me, I mourn for those babies. The tragedy is the neediness of my life at that time. Anyone who thinks abortion is something to be taken lightly... is so insane.... I'm talking about an experience that happened 35 years ago and I still feel sorrow. I know if I had let those pregnancies go to term, I wouldn't have been a capable mother. Because of my drinking pattern at the time, there is no guarantee of how the babies would have developed. For me, the ultimate judgment is my tubes being permanently scarred, what kind of justice is that. I was such a baby. I see my 15 year- old cousin and I can't even imagine. Someone just sitting on the toilet... It's just so incredible.

There was no support, I couldn't tell anybody. Since then, I've had opportunity to talk about it and feel better. For a long time, it was difficult for me. I would just keep thinking about that 15 year- old and the insanity of that. I think of the pill as so much more humane. After the abortions, I was lactating and I had to go back to school with cotton in my bras. Sometimes, I would be leaking. I'd have to say I spilled something on my blouse or sweater. I remember reading an article about abortion in People magazine 20 years ago. I identified with the woman. It was the first time I talked about it and seeing that story made me feel less isolated. In conclusion, I feel my life experience has been like a bridge. I've experienced illegal abortions like my grandmother and mother and the secrecy surrounding it but I've, also, experienced the legal abortion of my sister. Now, we have a pill and more forms of contraception. However, classism and racism are huge issues for me. How and where are services provided and who has ACCESS.

Murky Waters

By Miss Candy Bubbles

Hi. I am gonna tell my short murky story to you. It goes like this...

I have had three abortions (at least). One when I was 19, one when I was 20, and one when I was 21. Or something like that. The details aren't important. They were sad and confusing and the product of wanting to be fucked ("loved") at any cost. They were

all with the same partner. They tore him up, too. They also created a weird, melancholy, eternal bond between us.

I am now almost 37. My story doesn't go like this, "Thank God I didn't have those babies cause I never would have been able to accomplish all that I have..." No, it doesn't go like that. It goes like I've been in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction for less than a year. It all adds up if you know what I mean.

I spent a long time wanting somebody or something (even the government!) to make my choices for me. I am so glad to be growing up and growing older. I am really glad all those years are behind me yet love them too cause they are me. Today I am a woman and a mother who is coming back to life on her own terms, and a fine female who is trying to be pro-choice in every sense of the word. WORD!

A little rant about rights and access.....

-by Meredith

Rickie Solinger, author of many books on reproductive rights including "Beggars and Choosers" writes about the difference between *rights* and *choices* in regards to reproduction. There are historical distinctions between what rights women have access to depending on their class and race. Historically, there have been policies and laws in America that have denied many women the opportunity to even have choices. For more than the first half of this century, women were sterilized against their knowledge and will, as part of "family planning" initiatives. Others on welfare were coerced or forced to use long term birth control methods or be sterilized in order to continue to receive aid for their families. With the cutbacks of Medicaid, many women are denied the right to quality health care and funding for abortions that they otherwise can't afford. Many women are without pre-natal care or the ability to deliver their children in hospitals due to a lack of funds. Through the last ten years there has been a marked increase in legislation aimed at dictating the lives of pregnant women; from drug testing and a new law requiring HIV testing, to rules for mothers receiving financial assistance. The message is that women can't make our own decisions, or raise children, without the interference of the government unless we can afford it. Currently, the privatization of prisons, the fastest growing industry in America, has denied people who are incarcerated basic rights and choices. Pregnant women are often denied the option of having an abortion, or forced to give birth in shackles and immediately lose contact with the baby.

These are just a few ways women in this country, and world- wide, have been denied access to services or choices in their sexual health.

What separates the level of choice and control women have over their bodies has historically been an issue of privilege, particularly of race and class. As Dorothy Roberts writes in her book *Killing the Black Body*, "...regulating Black women's reproductive decisions has been a central aspect of racial oppression in America... it has shaped the meaning of reproductive liberty..." Beginning with the colonization of America by Europeans, Native Americans were systematically raped and taken as kept wives; and enslaved African women were raped by their captors and forced to reproduce to increase the population of slaves on a plantation. It wasn't until 1873 with the passage of the Comstock Act that contraceptives and abortion became illegal to all women in this country. However, they were still available to those who could afford them clandestinely. During the industrial era at the turn of the century, the face of reproductive oppression began to change. Poverty, hunger, and crime were growing issues in the newly formed city centers, and the theory of eugenics was used to justify policies that they believed would solve these problems.

The concept of eugenics was created, defined as an attempt to control human evolution by trying to manipulate the transmission of desirable traits and to eliminate undesirable ones. Eugenicists claimed that birth defects, poverty, crime, alcoholism, etc could be blamed on defective genes. In 1907 the first law was passed, in Indiana, permitting involuntary sterilization on these grounds. At least 30 more states followed, and people deemed "socially inadequate" were forcibly sterilized. This included people who were blind, homeless, deaf, orphans, scored low on IQ tests, and people of color. Politicians created family planning initiatives to limit the reproductive rights of women. In response, women including Emma Goldman, Marie Equi, and Margaret Sanger focused on distributing contraceptives and abortion services. The feminist/sufferagist movement grew, hoping to legalize contraceptives and abortion and to gain the vote for women. Debates began as women like Margaret Sanger believed in controlling and limiting the size of low-income families, while other activists sought overall betterment for women's health and living conditions for their families. Though the right to vote was achieved, unfortunately mainstream suffragists failed to incorporate the voices of low-income women and people of color, and they failed to reverse the Comstock Law. Regulation of women's bodies continued, in 1927 with the case of *Buck v. Bell* which ruled that Carrie Buck, who had a child out of wedlock and a mother in a mental institution, deserved sterilization. Later evidence proved that her pregnancy was the result of rape; but the appeal was denied. Hundreds of thousands of women were sterilized in this country in

the fifty years following this ruling
in rulings up to this year.

The Eugenics movement lost momentum in the 1930's as scientists began to disprove the theory; but involuntary sterilizations continued. In Europe in the 1940's the Nazi party cited the eugenics studies in the United States as basis for their experiments, and over two million Germans, gypsies, Jews, and others were sterilized. After World War II, family planning initiatives were created in America, as politicians feared the influx of immigrants would result in whites becoming the minority. They believed the increase in population would be a threat to the political, economic, and social stability of the country. Through the next few decades, initiatives were enacted to regulate the reproductive abilities of low- income communities; while failing to address the real issues of lack of housing, job availability, basic health care, etc. In the 40's and 50's, pregnant and unwed teenage women with economic means were most likely to attain "therapeutic" abortions, through connections with private doctors, or go to a home for unwed mothers. Many parents of middle and upper class families ordered their daughters to give their children up for adoption, as single motherhood was not seen as a socially acceptable lifestyle decision. Women on welfare had access to fewer options; if she kept her child, the welfare office usually threatened to deny continued funding if she refused to be sterilized. Women's access to choices differed greatly based on her class and race through governmental regulation.

In the 1960's family planning programs gained popularity and federal funding. In 1967 there was specific legislation that mandated federal family planning on the state level. It was passed as a part of a larger welfare reform bill. Early on, family planning initiatives were linked to the war on poverty, targeting low- income women, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban refugees, Native Americans, and migrant agricultural workers and their families. Non- profits like the Ford Foundation and Population Council delivered the services. The early belief was that people would agree to sterilization or contraception and population growth would subside. Studies in 1966 suggested that women who had recently given birth could be easily coerced to take contraceptives, and many women were contacted and sterilized in this manner. However, soon "zero population growth" became the end goal and policy makers were not seeing the dramatic results they had anticipated. In the name of the "common good" coercion was virtually implicit in government programs, and choice was actually illusionary, and many women were sterilized without their consent. In the 1970's sterilization was official federal policy with financial backing under the Nixon Administration through the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Low-income women were told they were getting their tonsils out, needed a new series of shots, etc. and instead were sterilized without their

knowledge and consent. Reaction came from Black Nationalists and EROS- the Endeavor to Raise Our Size, which viewed family planning initiatives for what they were- as "racial genocide", aimed at eliminating the growth of communities of color.

Just before abortion was legalized, some people within the family planning organizations began pushing for abortion options. J.D. Rockefeller, Ford as well as several other major donors began seeing that family planning initiatives were not successful in eliminating the "social ills". With influence from his daughters, Rockefeller was interested in broadening the meaning of population control to include economic development and the betterment of the condition of women. More money began to be placed into sexual education and widespread distribution and access to oral contraceptives. In 1972 the social security amendment required further expansion for states to provide reimbursements for family planning under Medicaid, and the next year abortion was legalized. Theoretically, these measures were to provide women with more choice in their reproductive decisions. However, improvement did not cross class and racial communities. By the late 1980's, while there was no federal funding for abortions, over 90% of the cost of sterilizations was covered by the federal government. Single low-income women were targeted for child removal, demonstrating that motherhood had become a class privilege. Private non-profit companies such as Children Requiring a Caring Kommunity (CRACK) formed to promote population control by paying $200 to women with substance abuse problems who were willing to be sterilized. There are fewer resources and choices open to women without the finances to afford them. In the United States, there is a significant portion of the population spending time in prisons, and they live with a serious lack of health services.

Women who are incarcerated have little access to rights in America, and this extends to reproductive freedom. Importantly, institutional racism plays a huge role in who is sent to prison and the length of stay. An African American or Latina woman is twice as likely to be convicted than a white woman for the same offense. Most women serving time for violent crimes are incarcerated for defending themselves against an abusive relationship. In America, women are not just denied rights once incarcerated, they are also used as test subjects. New hormonal contraceptives like Depo-Provera were tested on incarcerated women. States are creating harsher punishments for drug users who are pregnant. In South Carolina, doctors test low income women for drugs who are seeking pre-natal care. Women who have drugs in their system are then handed over to the police or the doctor will face criminal charges. Women incarcerated are forced to give birth in shackles, often chained to the bed, and the baby is immediately taken from them. Ninety percent of women in prison are single mothers, and lose contact with their children, often forever. In women's prisons, male guards outnumber women guards by at

least two to one, and many women are sexually assaulted and raped. Women who are incarcerated and pregnant who wish to have an abortion are usually denied this choice due to lack of funds. Even on the maximum rate of wages on the pay scale for prisoners, a woman would have to work 40 hours a week for 12 ½ weeks just to be able to afford an abortion in the first trimester; but by that time her pregnancy is more advanced and the price increases. These are just a handful of the problems women who are incarcerated are faced with, and as the population expands, more women will have a lack of power over their bodies.

These are just a few of the issues women have historically faced in regards to their reproductive health. However, one theme remains consistent throughout the changing laws and efforts; the different levels of access women have to make choices with their sexual health based on class and race. The term 'choice' assumes that all women have equal access and information to make decisions with our lives. However, we have unequal access to education, health care, and actual rights. Our race and class drastically affect what rights we actually have access to. To speak of reproductive rights we must broaden the discussion beyond the issue of keeping abortion safe, legal, and accessible. Women of color have organized to protect their reproductive rights by challenging coercive population policies, demanding safe and accessible birth control options, and working to ensure resources to keep their children healthy. While reproductive rights groups dominated by white women tend to focus solely on abortion rights, multiracial groups such as the Committee on Women, Population, and the Environment work towards promoting empowerment of women globally. Efforts include working towards an end to homelessness and sexual abuse, an elimination of police brutality, an end to criminalization of substance users who are pregnant, and for adequate housing, better income, and better health opportunities for families and communities. People working within the reproductive rights movement must begin to actively work for universal access and rights to information and choices, to provide quality pre-natal care to women regardless of our finances, to increase access to abortion and contraceptives, and improve health services for women who are incarcerated. Pregnant women who are uninsured and without means to pay hospital entrance fees should not have to give birth in the hospital parking lots after being denied entrance. We must eliminate trends and laws in public policy that consistently deny low income women access to the same services wealthy women have. We need to support measures for lesbian women to adopt, as well as new in vitro technology involving donor insemination and surrogate motherhood. We must work for a system that will be free of laws and obstacles that prevent families from living comfortable lives. We need the basic right to live our lives and to treat our bodies as we

want, and to do so must work to end systematic, cultural, and individual oppression which prevents these goals from being attained.

As Angela Davis writes, "women must climb in a way that guarantees all women, all classes, all people climb together". For all women to be able to have real choices, we must work to eliminate institutional, cultural, and internalized oppression which exists in this country and throughout the world, so that we have equal access to resources. This means supporting measures like affirmative action and to actively provide low-income women and people of color resources including high paying jobs; better working conditions; family health care; and home ownership. People are daily fighting against racial violence, ageism, homophobia, sexual assault, a lack of respect, and job and housing discrimination. Until the feminist movement effectively addresses these issues, there will be no growth for all women. We can't be single politic oriented, or there will still be hierarchy, injustice, and a lack of empowerment.

"Forward movement of women of color almost always initiates positive change for all women"- Angela Davis

Book Resources:

"Policing the National Body; Race, Gender, and Criminalization" anthology edited by Jael Silliman and Anannya Bhattacharjee

"Controlling Reproduction; An American History" edited by Andrea Tone

"Intended Consequences Birth Control, Abortion, and the Federal Government in Modern America" by Donald T. Critchlow

"Beggars and Choosers" by Rickie Solinger

"Women, Culture, and Politics" by Angela Davis

"Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves 1894-1994" by Deborah Gray White

"Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty" by Dorothy Roberts

Online Resources:

California Women's Commission, Blackwell Synergy, ACLU Online Archives, Prison Activist, The Lindesmith Center, Women of Color Web

Ana Helena

When I was 13, I helped my 15 year- old cousin get an abortion. She forged consent papers and we wrote down my phone number in case the doctor's office called to talk to her parents; I would pretend to be her mom. There was only one doctor who did abortions on the Peninsula, my friend Kurt's dad. They were South African, and new in town and I thought that was the reason he could brave the Catholic protesters who stood yelling outside his clinics on weekends. Those protesters were our aunts and cousins, and my (now dead) Grandma. We made the appointment for a Wednesday.

She had a D and C-- dilation and cotterage. A pretty fucked up abortion. They dilate your cervix, activating labor, stuff you with cotton balls and send you home to go through contractions for 24 hours. The next day, they scrape out your uterus. The abortion was really hard on my cousin, physically and mentally. She stopped eating and stayed in bed for several months. She still thinks the doctor fucked with her while she was in the operating room. I still regret that I wasn't with her because I was waiting by the phone.

Alaska is a bad place to get an abortion. That said, here's my story about not getting an abortion in the AK.

I was 27, and I had had a major car accident the week before, so when I went into the emergency room to check out a lump in my abdomen, it was all just part of the nightmare. My friend Katy went with me to the hospital. We had spent every day of the previous five weeks together. We were both passengers in the car when it went off the cliff. We were rarely apart after that.

I laughed at the doctor when he said he wanted to do a pregnancy test before he would X-ray by abdomen. When the results came back positive, I freaked out. The nurse tried to pull that shit where they act all happy and excited for you but I told her, "Fuck that. I'm going to Portland to get an abortion."

I had already delivered one child in that hospital; I adopted out a baby when I was 17. Maybe already going through the birth process makes it easier to have an abortion-- I've had several abortions, and while I never want to have another one, I don't regret any of them. Nor do I feel guilty. I've gotten pregnant using condoms and foam, the end of the pill, and the high- risk 'pulling out' method. It's all high risk for me.

I also know exactly how much of my life and my body a pregnancy requires; my hips were out of alignment for five years, I had lower back pain, heartburn, nausea, stretch marks, and hormonal emotional trauma. I broke a tooth 6 months into my first pregnancy and I have a missing tooth for each pregnancy thereafter. The worst part for me is how I feel scared and out of control when I find out that I am pregnant, like my body has betrayed me. Or maybe like I have betrayed my body.

Katy drove me back to my mom's house, and when I walked in, my mom asked, "What is it?" I tried to blow it off, saying that the lump turned out to be a hematoma from the seatbelt, nothing serious. But she knew there was more to it and kept pressing me till I finally told her the truth. "Lydia Pinkham. I wonder if they still sell that in the drugstore? I might have some. It's what they used in your grandmother's day. It's a Woman's Tonic, to bring on your blood. I used it when I got pregnant by your father the last time..." My mother, the lapsed Catholic, was recommending an herbal abortion to me. Not only that, she was telling me that she had used it herself. So weird.

Unfortunately, Lydia Pinkham's Woman's Tonic is no longer produced. Katy and I flew to Portland, (enduring the awful falling sensations of take-off and touch down) to look for it and any herbs that might help. A woman at Wonderland Herbs in Bellingham hooked me up with a book called a A Woman's Herbal by Rosemary Gladstar. She talks about Lydia Pinkham in there. Some of the key herb's in this tonic are: Black Cohosh, Red Raspberry, Motherwort.

It became apparent from all my reading that I would need more than a recipe. I would need to find another woman who had used these herbs successfully, but there was no woman forthcoming. Katy flew back to Nebraska and I traveled down to San Francisco with Michael to find some magic cure. I learned about Propolis, which helped me regain some of the strength I had lost in the car wreck, but nothing about an herbal abortion. I met up with an old friend who did massage on me to heal my ribs. I stayed with her for a few days and then headed back to Portland to schedule an abortion.

This, for me, is the easy part. Once the appointment is made, and I have the money order for $265 in my hand, it all gets simple.

Carrie drove me to the clinic and held my hand. I didn't see the tiny fish on the ultrasound flipping back and forth faster and faster-- that was a different time. This time, when they asked if I wanted morphine, I said yes, and the world click-click-clicked into place while Carrie talked to me soothingly and that tiny pinch happened. Unlike the abortion my cousin had, most of the time spent in the clinic in Portand is needed to prepare for the abortion, which happens in a matter of minutes. The pain lasts only for a few seconds. And then it's over. I can't describe my feelings of relief after.

I got the IUD later that year. We're so fertile, my family, I felt like I had to. It's the only thing that's worked for my mom. The egg can still get fertilized but won't implant in my uterus because something else already lives there. I'm willing to live with that, and the increased risk for cancer. But it sucks to feel like it's the price I have to pay for having sex with a man.

I haven't had an abortion in five years. I feel lucky.

-Ana Helena D.C. (soytaxista@hotmail.com)

A letter from another anthology collector...

Dear Meredith,

Hello. This last summer I somehow got a hold of your flyer calling for submissions for your zine "mine: an anthology of women's choices". I stuck it on my fridge hoping women who come by would be inspired to write. I myself had nothing to contribute because I'd never been pregnant. It's funny how things change. Since then I've gone through an abortion, the whole loss, and all those crazy emotions so many of us go through. I got back from traveling for Fall and Winter a couple weeks ago and found the new Doris zine #20 at my house. I read it sort of neutrally but suddenly so much of it meant so much to me. Cindy's writing was beautiful and then I found her review of your zine, about abortion. I guess my breath stopped for a second because I remembered it all, getting the flyer, thinking not much of it because I'd never experienced being pregnant, then realizing that now, in the afterthought of my abortion, how much I needed a zine like that. I got a book out of the library that featured sort of "well known" women who'd had abortions, most of them during the illegal days [The Choices We Made]. But I still search for more stories. And my desire is to find these stories, get in contact with women myself. So I think you'll be happy to know I'm gonna do a zine from here- from my area- Vancouver, Canada. Inspired by you out of need by me. I'm so excited to hear the stories, meet the women, rid ourselves of all the guilt, bad feelings, anger, talk to each other. My abortion happened a week and a half ago so my mind is still filled each day thinking of all this that I have gone through. What so many of us have.

Yours in solidarity, Gabreiela

Cindy

I am 33 and have had 6 abortions. I used to be really ashamed about this, but since I have started talking openly about them, I don't feel shame at all. I feel pretty proud about how much I have struggled to have control of my body and health.

There is so much social stigma against having multiple abortions. Even close friends are shocked and often I feel like people must think I'm really stupid and careless.

I don't think I'm stupid at all. I think knowing about and trusting our ~~bodys~~ bodies is really hard. I think communicating about sex, fertility and birth control is really hard. I don't think we have enough good birth control options or enough encouragement to feel like we have the right and the knowledge to make good decisions about our bodies and our health. I've been abused and have a lot of issues with body hate and lack of control over what happens to my body, and this makes it all especially difficult.

Most of the times I got pregnant it was because I was trying to understand my body's cycles and practice fertility awareness, but since I had so many body and sex issues, it was hard for me to be really good at it.

I think fertility awareness is amazing. Learning to understand when my body was fertile and not fertile made me feel like my body was mine and not just this foreign enemy object that did weird things and controled me. Checking and learning to read my vaginal fluids helped me overcome a lot of fear about touching my own body. It normalized my right to touch myself, both for health reasons and for pleasure.

I got pregnant a couple times because life got hectic and I lost track of what was going on with my body and my partner wasn't helping me to keep track and we were careless. Once it was because my partner didn't have condoms and when I am most fertile I can get pretty irrational and carried away by wanting to have sex. Twice it was because I was really drunk and didn't care.

I have slept with a lot of boys and almost always I have had to be the one to initiate conversations about birth control and STD's. I think this is really sad and fucked up. ~~They can be difficult conversations to initiate, I know, and I really wish boys would take more responsib~~

Half of the boys I got pregnant by, I didn't even tell them because I knew they would freek out and I'd endup having to take care of their feelings instead of taking care of myself.

~~I think boys need to be much more involved, eduaca~~

I think boys need to be much more involved, educated, caring and responsible.

Most of the times I've had abortions I have had support from my sister and my best friend, but have still felt really isolated and lonely. There is something really isolating about having this big thing going on in my life and not being able to talk openly about it - having to lie about what's going on with me.

The times I've been pregnant have been pretty intense times. They have been times when I stepped back from my life and reevaluated what I was doing, what I wanted in life and what I wanted from my friendships and relationships. A couple times I considered carrying the pregnancy to term and raising a child, but both times decided against it.

I have tried all different methods of birth control. I am proud of myself for continuing to learn about my body and to try to communicate about sex and birthcontrol with my partner and to try and figure out what kindsof birth control ~~work ofr~~ work for us. I have no guilt or regrets about my abortions.

- cindy

Megan

It's hard to look over the interview we had and try to rework it. But the whole point is that I had misgivings about being pregnant. The whole pregnancy. Don't we all? But once my son Yoka was born, I did not look back. This is my life and I'm proud of it. He is a life I have supported and nurtured to the best of my abilities. I am proud of our life, the two lives we have together. I had a baby with a South American who I barely knew. Now that my son is seven means that I get time off from being a single parent- sometimes big chunks of time- and he gets two cultures. Two for the price of one. And I am half or adoptive latina for birthing an hispanic. The enduring link to a people, culture, and language that I ador. It was all in the cards. I am not complaining. But I'll admit that life up here, up north in the big ol US of A is very tedious at times. I sure do long for those Mexican days, those Guatemalan nights and the Chilean highway with my backpack on my back. Perhaps that inextricable pull is something I love. Just the slightest bit of tension to keep me aware of my history to always remind me, annoy me or tickle me into thinking of where I was before here.

I got pregnant with my son Yoka when I was 29 years old. I had gotten pregnant twice before and had abortions each time. My first was when I was 18 and I got pregnant on prom night. The second was in Guatemala in 1995. Then I got pregnant with the same person in Chile six months later, and that's when I had Joka. The last two pregnancies are very connected. When I was in Chile I searched for an abortion, where it is completely illegal. I knew from friends who had abortions in Guatemala and Mexico that doctors do "fake" abortions where they pretend you miscarried and need a D & C. At the time, as long as you had something like three hundred dollars a gynecologist in an office in one hour will do a D & C, which is called a respaje; a scraping of the uterus as long as you aren't too far along.

I got pregnant and found in my pension, youth hostel, a card that a woman American Peace Corps volunteer had written a really cryptic message; that this doctor will help you in ANY situation. He was confidential and I really got the vibe, and was right. I don't know why I didn't go back to the United States, I really was doing my immersion program there, and wanted to be fully immersed in the culture. I didn't want to cut my trip short or spend double or triple the money- the abortion was about $150

there. I went to an office and I think I got a pregnancy test and then the doctor set up an appointment the next day or something. My friend Nancy waited with me, it was really great to have someone with me. Finally they laid me down and got me ready and the anesthesiologist came to give me a shot to the hip so they could do a D & C, but obviously he wasn't in the know and I didn't realize this. He asked me how many days it had been since I had been bleeding, and I said well, I haven't bled at all, that's the problem, that's why I'm here. So he was super freaked out, he slammed his hands down on the table and there I am with my legs spread wide naked on the table and he's throwing a fit. I don't know what the doctor had to do to get him to leave without saying anything. I was a little scared at the time for the doctor, but I think he was just putting on a show. So there we sit for three more hours, and now I think that no one in the office knew; that it's only the doctors that take the cash. I don't know if they are just pro-choice or what, but it is normal in Latin America to be able to get the procedure done even though it's illegal. They just say that a woman came in bleeding from a miscarriage, and that she needs a D & C. The doctor must have called his friend and transferred me to another clinic, where I had the D & C. It was dark at this time, we had gone in initially at 8:00 am and by this time it was after 6:00 pm. We whispered and laughed about the whole day and when they were transferring us, the doctor opened the door, looked both ways to make sure no one was coming down the street, got us into a car with dark windows; it was freaky at this point anyway. We got to another clinic where the first doctor stayed, but his friend did the procedure. I felt super thankful, it seemed like the doctor went out of his way to help me out. I had the anesthesia and was out and woke up about a half hour later and Nancy was there. I think it's a pretty bad way to do an abortion. That was the only time I've gone under before and they didn't weigh me or anything; it was general anesthesia and though I didn't feel in risk I think people in the states have to be much more cautious. I spent the night there and the healing was difficult; all the bruising and bleeding afterwards was more intense than from suction abortion like they do in the United States. But if that's the only thing you have it's way better than not having that option. I have friends who have done it in Ecuador, and Columbia where they did suction; the thing is that in all these countries abortion is illegal but there are certain ways to get things done in these countries.

My experience in Chile six months later was that I wasn't sure why I got pregnant with the same guy on the first night we slept together. Before I had only known him for a month and now I had only known him long distance for six. I wasn't of the super high ideal of not sleeping with men I didn't know really well, but I had a lot of friends who were single moms and I thought that that was not how I was going to do it. I wanted to have somebody; my partner Rodrigo was somebody, he wasn't into the idea of getting an abortion, but he also wasn't interested in being a family with me. I was really torn that time, I again didn't want to cut my trip short and I called about tickets to Florida, and

found a clinic there which did sliding scale in Miami, but that would have also been all my money. So I did have a couple experiences trying to get a doctor to give me an abortion, but though you can get one there if you have enough money; because I was American no doctors wanted to touch me. Also, it would probably have been $1000 which would have been ridiculous. So I was crying every single day wondering what to do; feeling torn because I didn't know Rodrigo very well and I didn't want to have a baby. I was lonely and sad and as crushed as I'd ever been in my life. To think about it even now, I cringe and feel those horrible pangs of grief. Funny how the life inside me only amplified my lonliness. I had started this trip, which was supposed to be five years long through Latin America, and I didn't want to end it. I was camping in the desert and stayed with some really great people and talked to my mom who was dead; I felt that I really needed help figuring out what to do. I took a lot of herbs from a shop, pennyroyal and stuff, and it totally didn't work at all and I don't recommend it for anybody; it's got to be super strong. I also spend a lot of time hitting my stomach, and not that I thought it would work, but just wondering what to do with this thing that was growing inside of me, while I was feeling tired and sick all the time. I took long hikes and a whole day trip into a doctor's office and sat in front of him and was totally shamed. It seems like everyone in Chile is totally Catholic, while in Mexico they are too but just to a certain extent. They aren't going to have unwanted children there; I met mothers who had five children and had abortions to keep from having a sixth and seventh, who were totally devote Catholics. Women in Chile told me they fly or take a three- day bus ride to Cuba to get an abortion.

At that point I decided to have my baby. I don't think my mom necessarily spoke to me, I was completely ambivalent about it when I decided to stop looking for an abortion and to have it, but I was totally torn up. I was twenty nine years old and I had just had an abortion, and I thought, well, the spirit wanted to be on this earth. Sometimes I think that first abortion was also Joka. Maybe that's a way to have closure, but I guess it was just time. I stayed in Chile for 8 months, pregnant and torn up about having the baby. I didn't see Rodrigo, we were in phone contact every once in a while to fight; I was convinced he should see his baby born. I had found a midwife but by the end nothing turned out good enough; for seven months I felt like a mother bird looking to find her nest, which I couldn't find anywhere so I decided to cut my trip short anyway and fly back to the United States to give birth. I had my child with friends. My idea would have been to have Rodrigo participate; even though I had fallen out of love with him at that point. My midwife was a real activist for fathers being present when their babies are born; she thinks it changes their relationship for the rest of their life; which I agree with. But by the time I left I didn't shed a tear when I got on the plane to go home. Rodrigo was very proud and excited to have a son, but emotionally our relationship was so hard that it wasn't until Joka was seven months pregnant that he came to the States to see him.

I started my mothering experience alone, but with friends. I was totally comfortable with it but when the baby was born then he wanted to be a dad and to see his son, so we negotiated that and we started our life as parents together.

I was living in Oregon so he flew there and we lived there for eight months and got jobs in Missoula, Montana teaching Spanish and I married him so that he could stay in the country and apply for graduate school. It was a huge decision to make and I decided to do it so that he would be a dad to Joka. He came ready with all his paperwork, his degrees, everything to see if he could get a degree. Rodrigo just finished his PHD, he's a student kind of guy. It was very emotionally satisfying for Joka to have a father and he was great to have around, when I went to work he would watch him and we didn't have to deal with daycare. Everything was great for about six months, using my savings and the welfare system to help and enjoy my time nursing my son. But then people who were close to me were saying, well, what are you going to do with your life. Joka was born in the middle of the west coast rain and I was staying with friends on a farm, and it was ideal; just taking long walks, picking black berries when he was asleep, making salsa, canning things, it was really a great time. But reality hit that I would have to do something. My time ran out for me to be staying with my friends who were already living in a very communal situation so I started staying with someone who was doing room for trade. That eventually wore out and was such a bummer, that I had to think about what to do. At that time some friends had an opening in a room in Corvalis and I got to rent a room for cheap and began a job hunt for a part time job and found a cleaning job at the Waldorf school. When Rodrigo arrived it was great because I had just found that job and needed him to stay with Joka.

We had had this whole time letter writing, to name Joka and the relationship became warmer and I was fine with having a helper at that time. I had fallen out of love with him, and never fell back in love with him. But he had fallen back in love with me; he told me he had convinced himself, worked on it, and decide he was in love with his wife and son, even though we still didn't really know each other and weren't very good roommates. I don't know what I hoped to tell Joka, but it wasn't easy for us to live together. I went two full years with him. I had talked to lots of women, older women, women who had been through divorces, and women who had twenty year old children who talked about the hell they had to pay during their child's teenage years wasn't worth it. They said that relationships really needed a test, at least two years to make sure, so I stayed with him two years to the day. But I had been waiting that whole time to say that I thought I could really do it on my own. Those seven months before he arrived really made me feel like I could do it. Maybe if I hadn't had that it would have been different. My perspective was that I had started the project on my own, getting things together, and that I could keep doing it.

I had friends and family to help me, but I am also an independent person. When Joka was three I was on my own again and was happy. I have never thought that Joka needed both of us living together for him to be ok. I think children are to be considered when people get together or break up, but I feel that I have always been a single mom since I got pregnant; no one ever caressed my swollen belly when I was pregnant or celebrated it. I think that definitely changed my perspective on the family unit. So after we went to Missoula for the jobs Rodrigo applied to universities and we had been at a potluck where someone mentioned that the University of Pittsburgh had really good scholarships for graduate students. It was better for him being a citizen than as a Chilean student looking to study abroad. He is a student in the department of Hispanic language and literature and is a real philosopher kind of guy so he applied and he is teaching Spanish 101 five days a week for a tuition waiver. I initially had said that I would never move to Pittsburgh, ever, I was a total west coast girl. I actually had a good rental house and a great garden and a good job in an immersion pre-school, doing well and loving the kids. I knew that I could support myself on what they were paying me. So I had it worked out that that would be the natural way for me to end our relationship; where he would leave and I would keep up with an independent life.

But some wave of romanticism came over me and I thought I'd give it one shot; plus I am an adventurer and a traveler, and I think people's attitudes in the west that places like Pittsburgh were disgusting needed to be proved wrong. I don't know if that even occurred to me, but I thought what is so wrong with it, and thought I'd try it. We were getting along at that point, his whole family came to visit and I thought about Joka being near his father and so I went. I had friends who were constantly asking me when was I going to get out of this relationship, because he is really so unlike whom I'd enjoy being in a relationship with. I was the typical working class American girl supporting the family working three or four jobs; I worked at the International School, taught Spanish after-school, substituted in the public schools, and I worked at the video store while he took care of the kid. But it was not an even relationship in many ways. So I was totally unexcited about our relationship but came to Pittsburgh and totally enjoyed the town. I like the neighborhood I'm in and was introduced to all the amazing women and children that hang out together now. I mentioned at a solstice potluck that I would be interested in doing a Spanish immersion program and then had five children to start it. I have a huge house, four bedrooms and the whole upstairs is for the Spanish school. As soon as the winds were moving and people were filling out applications and felt secure, I asked to be separated and Rodrigo moved out of the house. I am so glad that I didn't just let him leave Missoula, even though it was harder. Rodrigo even said that I should have let him just go so that we wouldn't have had to go through all this pain, dividing of stuff and everything. It is still emotionally hard to this day but Joka seems to be completely happy and can still see his dad.

Spanish has been a complete part of my life. Rodrigo says I was an American looking to lose myself and grab onto a piece of Latin America for good. So it feels good to have a bilingual son and that I have family in Chile. I definitely was not going to have a baby with a white boy. It's funny, because even before I met Rodrigo I spent a year just learning the language, hanging out with my dictionary, and this was my "University" of Life. I was excited that I was able to learn Spanish outside of school and come home and be able to get a job without a higher degree using my language skills. Also, my entire life revolves around my child, and almost all my friends have children and they hang out together. It's definitely my life here. Certainly if I didn't have a child I wouldn't have started a Spanish immersion pre-school. I don't think I would have had the patience to get into the groove if I hadn't had my own child. When I was in Oregon I had been looking to work with migrant workers and campesinos, which is a substantial population there. I would have loved to provide information about services, and to hang out with the children when the parents are working. I was going to train at the women's shelter; they were always looking for someone who speaks Spanish; so these were all jobs I have interest in pursuing; maybe when my child is older and my focus goes somewhere else, I would love to work with adults in some capacity, but for now my focus is now on children.

I have many friends who are childless by choice, my best friends are two couples who offered me a place to stay with Joka, who have offered to help me home school him when he gets to seventh grade and I can't teach him science. My whole time in Oregon was spent with a lot of people who don't have children, and Joka was the only kid around. I have a few friends in Missoula who have children, but they also don't have a big community of parents. It was different than in Pittsburgh where it was amazing getting in quick contact with a community of people I really want to hang out with who all have children. Now it's why I have stayed and made it work here. I do feel that I have a pretty positive outlook, I' m a pretty happy person, and that I try to make the best of situations. I did feel that I needed a two year pregnancy to get comfortable with the transition from single to being a mother. I was talking to Oudi about this and how when I was pregnant I felt like I could let it all hang out, and felt like it was great. I felt healthy and I have journal entries where I say goodbye to single Megan. Once the baby was born it was fine, I had children around and babysat when I was young so it wasn't a shock or weird to have my baby. Now I feel great about having had wide experiences from being single to being a mother. Joka will live between me and Rodrigo eventually, and I will be single again at certain points, when I'll see him rarely and talk to him rarely, then I'll have a new phase to look forward to. I would love to open up a sister school in Latin America, so I could live there at some point and my friends could take their kids there too. I could teach in New York for a year, or who knows. There are a lot of ideas about how I could change my life in the next five or ten years, places or projects. I don't see

myself being stifled ever. Sometimes we talk about how having children can validate us when we don't know what else to do. Parenting is something that gives my life meaning; it is incredibly tough and requires a stable mental state to give so much to someone else and I totally enjoy it.

-Megan

Celeste sassy monkey...

I was under the impression that I couldn't ever become pregnant. Or maybe that I could become pregnant but not have a successful pregnancy. Because of years of sexual abuse, my body was defective and wrong. I was wrong too because the stick I peed on in my partners bathroom confirmed what I already knew. I was pregnant.

My body has always seemed like my arch nemesis, always plotting against me, never letting me rest or feel safe from its unending consequences. I know that this is not a healthy, mentally sane way to feel. But it is how I feel. But back to the test...

I told my partner, who went, in a daze, to smoke a cigarette. I climbed into his bed feeling proud and excited and scared and confused and miserable and hopeful and hopeless.

The only physical symptoms I can remember were sleeping 12 or more hours per night and sore breasts. Holy fuck, the sore breasts. I began wearing two athletic bras at once to contain my aching swollen breasts.

I chose my abortion clinic based on cost and in part from a friend who had two abortions herself there. I had to drive to another city 75 miles away to get an abortion for $200, the cheapest I could find. (Not including the prescription and follow up visit.) At the time I was making more than my partner, so I paid for it. He wanted to pay for the whole thing, or at least half, but I wouldn't let him. I told him that it was silly because I could afford it and he couldn't, plus I had repeatedly assured him that I was physically unable to become pregnant, so I felt like it was my fault. But really, if he had paid for half, it would kind of be like he owned half of the experience. Like he had bought the rights to it or something. It doesn't make sense, but I guess I needed the money thing to allow myself to feel what I felt and not just worry about how my partner was doing. I had to pay to not be concerned with that, or something. I don't know, but I have come to realize in writing this that I still resent him for not paying for it. That's weird...

The day of the abortion we drove to the clinic early and made nervous conversation. I was terrified. There were people on the sidewalks yelling and trying to get me to talk to them. They couldn't legally set foot on the clinics private property, so they leaned in from the sidewalk and shouted.

I cried on and off. There were about 12 women getting abortions that day. The men who had accompanied some of them were confined to a downstairs waiting area, with talk shows blaring on the t.v. There were probably 6 men there, including my partner, who tired to focus on reading James Joyce while Montel Williams kept the room captivated, almost sedated.

Upstairs we just sat around for hours. Occasionally one of us would be called into a different room for a blood test or medical information. Finally, it was time. I took off my pants as directed and laid on the table, feet in stirrups. A nurse explained a brief outline of what would occur. I had my partner to drive my car, so I was allowed the general anesthetic, which the old, white, male doctor jabbed into me as soon as he rushed through the door of my little room.

He started chatting with the nurse about vacation destinations and poking around between my legs. The drugs hit me and my mind blurred and my brain functions were delayed, but I could still *feel everything*. My mouth wouldn't form words, but I could scream, and I did. I fucking screamed bloody murder and I think I managed to flail my legs a bit because the doctor shut up about his beach house for a second to hold down my legs and order the nurse to control me. I screamed still, thinking only of the indescribable pain permeating through the lower half of my body and of the poor girl in the next room, on the other side of the paper thin walls hearing this whole thing as she waited her turn.

I remember the doctor murmuring "I'm halfway done" after I had been screaming for a really long time. I could speak actual words by this point and I was begging him to stop, saying I had changed my mind, pleading with him. The nurse let me squeeze her hand really hard. Telling me that he was halfway done was the only thing the doctor said directly to me the entire time.

Afterwards, it was a blur. It's funny, but I had to wait about 6 hours before the procedure and 20 minutes after it was done they kicked me out.

I don't have any idea what I would do if I became pregnant again. Probably the herbal thing. About a month after my abortion I went to an anti-tampon conference and attended a "menstrual extraction/herbal options" workshop where I saw for the first time the instruments used in most clinical abortions.

I broke down in that workshop. It was for women only and I think everyone of us was crying a little, but I actually lost control and sat in the corner clutching my gut, apologizing to my poor uterus. Apologizing for not knowing better and apologizing for not being able to stop the abuse that started when I was 7 and didn't stop until I was 11. My poor body. My damaged goods, being only familiar with pain and only able to induce the same in me.

I'm trying to learn to love my body and heal and forgive it so we can someday be on the same team.

The abortion clinic was very adamant about a follow up visit two weeks following the abortion. I think I was even forced to schedule the appointment before leaving the clinic, but I never went to it. In fact, it is almost 3 years later and I haven't been for any gynecological care since then. I know I need to get a breast exam and pap smear, but I can't bring myself to schedule an appointment. I keep making sure I'm too busy.

I'm still with my partner who is the most amazingly loving and supportive person I've ever known. I don't think about my abortion much, but when I do I resent him and all men. I'm trying to work through this and he is infinitely patient in dealing with me. Maybe someday I'll be ready for him to pay me back for half of the abortion. Maybe someday, but not yet.

Sally Sparling

I had a Delkon Shield IUD failure when I was 21 and a Lippes Lup failure at 22. I went to an OB in San Francisco who was totally anti- abortion. It was a very humiliating situation. At the time you had to have a shrink declare that it would be detrimental to your mental health to have a baby. You had to be referred to a shrink by an OB-GYN. I asked around to find out what to do and then just started out on the path. I was able to use some of my connections to find out where to go and who would do it. The first doctor who was so awful was someone that I had thought would be supportive. The only doctor that was supportive was one of the few black physicians in the community. He was a black physician who worked in the Haight- Ashbury section of San Fransisco. He referred me to a shrink who agreed that it would be detrimental to my health and told me how to get it paid for by insurance. I can't remember if I had to apply for medical or if my private insurance paid. I think that I had to get medical based on the shrink report. I went to a private hospital in SF. A friend accompanied me who was a nurse. I was very sick afterward because they used innovar as the anesthetic. The procedure was scary because of the drug they used at that time had a paralyzing effect on your extremities. Very few mainstream people were performing abortions. The black community was the only place that you could find someone to do it legally. There really was no support emotionally except what I created myself. I felt very alone, humiliated by the mainstream medical community. I was fortunate to have information and access to people who knew where to go. I had a lot of support from friends. It was an awful mental and physical experience. I think that things have improved since the true legalization but I think that there is still a very indifferent attitude in the medical community about the emotional and physical impact of the procedure. I was worried about birth-control options since I had two failures on birth-control. I was angry about trying to be responsible, ie use birth-

control, and have it fail, ***twice***. It wasn't easier with the second failure, except I knew what to expect. I felt guilty, worried that I would not have a normal pregnancy when I wanted to have children. Now I have two girls, 16 and 19. We have discussed abortion; my own and the issue of choice. I am still involved in health care. I have been committed to changing the experience people have of their health care experiences. I have been supportive and active in maintaining freedom of choice. It is not an easy choice to make. But freedom of choice is essential to female emancipation and equality.
- Sally Sparling

"That was the fifth rape."

Editor's note: I went to a Take Back the Night march last year and an incredible woman got up and spoke about being pregnant as the result of a rape. She didn't know what she was going to do. I went to her afterwards and gave her my name and number and told her if she ever wanted someone to talk to about it, to call. A few days later she called and we spoke for awhile; I tried to give her what advice or information I could and wondered what happened.. Almost a year later, I saw flyers for an evening of pro-choice films on the same college campus celebrating the anniversary of Roe v. Wade. I went and announced that I was still collecting stories for this zine compilation. The same woman gave me her number and we met the next day. This is her story...

It started just over a year ago when I was raped. It was rape number five. About three weeks afterwards, I went to my school doctor and got the STD test and pregnancy test and everything was negative and I was relieved. They called me back twenty minutes later and said that now my pregnancy test was inconclusive. I could either come back then and take a blood test, or I could do a urine test first thing the next morning. I was like, ok I'll be there in twenty minutes. I turned the car around and when the blood test came I was pregnant. I was laughing from the relief of knowing, but absolutely bawling.

It was very emotional to find out I was pregnant on top of everything. There were so many little things that happened. I was going back and forth, I know my mom is very Catholic and anti-abortion. She told me if I ever had an abortion to lie and tell her I miscarried. That's what I did. It was kind of a weird situation because one of my sisters was also pregnant, she was about six weeks behind me in the date. She was sick and spent a month in the hospital. Both she and her baby made it through. At first I decided I would keep the pregnancy and give the baby up for adoption. I was working with this great lesbian couple who were totally wonderful. At the same time, once I started to show and feel more pregnant, I wanted my body back. I had fought those feelings in the

beginning, but now found that I needed to fight again when all the sickness and physical changes started happening.

I was going to therapy three times a week. I've been seeing therapists since I was 13, but the woman in the sexual assault center at my school is the best therapist I've ever had. She's amazing. The first day I met with her she told me I was going to be pissed off and angry. She wanted to let me know, she wasn't scared of upsetting me. She wasn't going to just sit back and be like, "So how does that make you feel?" She was assertive, and I need someone like that. She was the biggest help in the entire thing, very supportive. More than my friends and family were. I didn't tell my pregnant sister what happened until a couple months ago. My other sister who lives out of state was supportive, she offered to pay for it or come with me. My parents are divorced and my father lives out of state. He is a lawyer and said, it's ok, I'll be there for you, let me know if you need money.

My friend who works at the adoption agency told me that because it was a rape I would not have to contact the father to give up parental rights. My father told me otherwise. He said he dealt with this before and what they do is put an ad in the paper with the mothers name and say that a child is going up for adoption and that this is the chance for the father to get parental rights. I was like, NO WAY!!! First of all, I don't ever want him to know; I can't even remember his face, and I don't want him to know he got to me in this way. Second, he should not have a right!!! Connected to this one of my ex- girlfriends told me she had met him and that he told her the story and that I wasn't actually raped! I said to her, "YOU weren't there, you don't know what happened. Don't EVER, ever contact me again!"

I've been in school for a long time and I wanted to keep my life in place and do what I needed to do. I didn't want another year off my life. I didn't do anything, it wasn't my fault, so why should I sit here and suffer? Why should I put my life aside because some asshole thought it was his right... I was not ok with that. I had applied for internships and I thought, if I kept the pregnancy I wouldn't be able to do any of this. I wouldn't be able to finish this semester in school or do a lot of things I planned on. I was not ok with putting off these things in my life. I was crying all the time; the whole thing is so painful emotionally and physically.

While I was pregnant there was a Take Back the Night march. I go back and forth with whether or not I'm even ok with what I spoke that night. It was definitely an experience that made me feel like I wasn't alone and that I could get through this. At the same time, it kind of makes me shake that so many other people also know my story. I was sharing something that is so personal, but at the same time I know that it was a good thing to do, that it is important that these stories are out there. I wish I could have said

more that night, or been more clearheaded. But there is no clear-headedness about it. That was before I went to Planned Parenthood.

Then I went to Planned Parenthood and they stop giving abortions at 18 weeks. I was 20 weeks pregnant when I decided to have an abortion. They gave me the number of the hospital I could go to in town and gave me advice. The most important part of the Planned Parenthood meeting was that it was the first time in the entire pregnancy when the fetus had been called a POTENTIAL life. That little word made such a difference in everything. It made the world ok and let me do what I needed to do for me. I hate all the people who talk poorly about PP. They offered me information on all three choices; abortion, adoption, and choosing to raise a child myself. They gave me numbers for all the agencies and information about financial aid for poor mothers. I needed to see a social worker at the hospital before the procedure. I was dating a woman at the time who was amazing. From the door I told her what was going on and she was like, either way, I'm here for you. She went to the social worker with me and was very supportive. The social worker was there to explain the informed consent. It's a twenty- minute meeting where you watch a film which explains the chances of death and complications from both abortion and giving birth and tells you all the medical information with both. That was helpful for me. It's amazing how many more deaths are from birthing than abortion; it's almost like 2 to 1; an extreme difference. Not that I was scared of dying from either, but the pro-lifers are always talking about how abortion kills us, it's just not true. Since it was a rape I was not financially responsible for the abortion.

The abortion was a two- day procedure. I went in at 7 am; before all the mothers come in, so it's less emotional; which was good for me. But I didn't see the doctor until 11:30 and my ride was supposed to come pick me up at noon. The procedure is first a half an hour dilation of the cervix, then wait for an hour and a half, then another half hour dilation. I was really angry that I'd already been there for four and a half hours. I went to the desk and said, "I've been waiting all morning and no one has even said hello to me. I'm going to smoke a cigarette, and when I come back down if there's not someone here I'm going to come back next week or something because I can't wait here all day!" I was very upset, but they finally saw me and they did the procedure. Oh was that painful! They gave me the shot to the cervix to numb it; which also causes the most extreme cramps I'd ever had. Because all the time changes my ride had to do other stuff and when I got done she was a half hour away. I didn't feel good about waiting around outside the hospital so I decided to walk to the library, which is about a 15- minute walk.

It was the only day I have ever seen abortion protesters in that part of town, right in front of the library!! I was about to faint, had my little prescription for painkillers and felt like I wanted to hit the protester who had a sign that said, "(my hospital) kills babies

and hurts women" and I wanted to yell, "This isn't hurting me!" I had to look at those horrible huge signs, which aren't even actual abortions, to cross the street. As I started to walk I was calling my friends who lived nearby to come get me. I was feeling faint and was relieved when my ride appeared and I got into the car to go home. That was a painful day- physically- it was hard to think of anything else.

The next day I dropped off a final and then headed with my girlfriend to the hospital for the second procedure. So they gave me anesthesia and I took a left hand turn. I had some friends pick me up and stay with me after the procedure. Even though they couldn't empathize, they could sympathize; none of them had had an abortion or known any one who had. I found that a lot of my friends were supportive before but found that afterwards a lot of the support dwindled. I didn't want to be around anyone the week following the procedure, but there were certain dates I wanted them to be around. Particularly, I didn't want to be alone for what could have been the due date. I had two friends who were supposed to come over and neither one even called me. I was upset about that. There were times I called people for support and didn't really get it. I think one thing that should be done for aftercare are 'on call friends', like people to commit to be there when we need them. It was also really hard to hear about trivial dramas that were happening to people around me at that time, I just felt like none of them had been through shit. Also, a few people would talk about me behind my back, and it was just NONE of their business.

One thing I don't say often, because it was so difficult, was that during the pregnancy I felt it move. I was exactly 5 months pregnant. I was big, I was showing, I was pregnant. Sometimes I feel regret, sometimes I don't. When I go to my sister's house and I see her baby that's hard because that's about how old my baby would be too. Sometimes I do sit down and say, well, that could be, but THIS is my life, and I wouldn't have the things I have now if I had made the other choice. I would be so far back. One thing that really pushed me in the direction I went into was thinking about handing a child over to someone else and I wasn't sure if I was emotionally capable of that. I know I'm strong but I don't know if I could do that. I have the whole scenario in my head of my boobs leaking- they leaked for about a month; I had torpedoes, skud missles. I had to sleep with a towel around my chest because it got so bad. But I'm ok with it even though it still hurts. It took a lot of time to even come to terms with everything that happened, I still deal with it, maybe not as often as I should.

As far as the perspective adoptive couple goes, it took some time, but they did adopt a baby boy, I don't think they have him yet. They got him from another country and he was 6 months old and they needed to wait another 6-8 months to get him. There was a time after that that I almost thought about calling them and offering to be a

surrogate mother, in a different situation, where I could be more detached from it all together. I know they will be excellent parents.

I have never before been really active in anything and now I want to be. I can't tell you what that choice meant to me. I can't imagine being in my shoes and *not* having that option. I definitely would not be ok. I would like to be more active, I've been going to a few pro-choice forums and events but I'm not exactly active. It has made me think about what I want to do with my life and that I'd like some portion of my life to be fighting for choice. I know it's a needed thing for abortion to not only be available but *accessible*. I don't regret any of it because it made me who I am, but at the same time it still hurts. I really like the perspective that I have now. It made me more conscious of my priorities and I'm not sure where I would be if all of last year hadn't happened. I still plan on having a child later. I think it'll be harder than if this hadn't happened, but I still plan on having children. That's my story.

-anonymous

Sasha

I want to do art about my abortion because intellectually I have no way to work with it...my brain shuts down when confronted by the dual realities of conception →

how easy and thoughtless and random and sleazy it was...

Versus

how hugely significant the results are and the necessarily urgent decision which follows...

A lot of what I submitted to this zine was pulled from my journal or my sketchbook... because when I tried to write something specifically for the zine I just couldn't. Partly because I'm insecure about writing and don't think of myself as a writer, and partly because everything I think and feel about my abortion has been invalidated by almost everyone I've talked to about it, which makes me reluctant to spill my guts in print to be read by people I've never met. I'm angry because everyone is so supportive of my right to an abortion, but few can deal with the fact that I also have negative feelings about it. I've been told: get on with your life, don't live in the past, don't dwell "too much", don't carry regrets...I've also been told that it's "creepy" to think about my non-existent baby – i.e. how old it would be now or what it might look like....and I've even had a man tell me that he knows what it's like because his girlfriend had an abortion! And these are friends of mine, progressive, intelligent activists...

Well fuck all of you who tried to tell me how to feel about this!
I'm 99% sure that I made the right decision for my life and that I made the best decision I could at the time. But that doesn't change the fact that I also know I would have loved the baby if I had had it, and that I made an irreversible decision with enormous, life-changing consequences, regardless of how I feel about it. My life would have changed forever if I had kept the baby, but as it is I chose to stick with the path I was on and not let my pregnancy continue. Does this make me not pro-choice enough, because I want some validation for all of the different feelings wimmin have about abortion? I seriously doubt that I'm the only womin to ever experience negative feelings about her decision. But I think that we don't want to acknowledge that because it would be like admitting that the anti-choice wackos (who want us to believe that we will be forever scarred and traumatized) are right. Well, I have doubts and regrets, and the wackos are still wrong and I still believe in a womin's right to choose.

SUNDAY NIGHT 3/23/03

Feeling depressed about my abortion still, and still no one to talk to about it....feeling a lot of confused regret. Still trying to remind myself that the situation was really fucked up...and not a good time/mental place/situation to have a baby....but that doesn't change the fact that if I had had the baby I'd love it regardless, and it would still have been a person, who would have been a part of my life, and so easily is not here, and was so easily created....

Circular journal entry aka this would have been your second birthday

Missing my period and going to the store to buy the test and knowing the results before I even took the test...the feeling when I saw the results – cold, already knowing my decision getting out the phone book to pick a clinic calling and making the appointment for the following week (I think) so matter-of-fact and emotionless (to match his constant state of being) going to the clinic only one old man with a bible waiting to tell me that jesus loves my baby looking around at all of the other women, ones who came with their mothers or their boyfriends or with both some pretty young but most closer to my age or older routines of getting weighed, having a blood test and the payment ($380ish) and the choice – anesthesia, or not into the room clothes off up on the table male doctor it gets underway pricking pulling sensations a mechanical noise which I can't recall minor cramps and once the actual abortion was underway, some pain and a lot of uncomfortable feelings like my uterus was being pulled out of my body promptly threw up as soon as I sat up the nurse was sort of nice, the doctor an extension of the machine and not the least bit gentle nausea and cramps eat a cookie take the pills one girl looked very sick another

unbelievably chipper a little bit of blood on the pad soon nothing ...until almost a year later realizing with a sudden frozen thought...it wasn't his.
---Brain shrinking from the reality of my carelessness
---now – trying to understand the consequences of my decision

The facts of my experience:

I was 21. I had a boy friend at the time but things were sucking and as a consequence we weren't having sex very often anymore. I went to a friend's party in another town. I got very drunk. I fucked some dude I'd never met. Completely out of control and no birth control. Found myself pregnant a few weeks later. Assumed it was my boyfriend's. I didn't really think too much about it. Nearly a year later I realized very suddenly, that it was from hooking up with the random guy at the party. This changed my whole perception of the experience. I felt ashamed of my carelessness but I didn't sweat it too much. Then another year and a half later I met another guy; he has a kid who is absolutely adorable and charming . And it really fucked with my head to know/see someone in my peer group as a parent. This has again changed my whole perception of that experience. I have been feeling doubt and regret also a lot of confusion because I know I made the best decision but still have regrets about it. There is no one to relate with. Everyone who I talk to has something fucked up to say about it. The only supportive friends are the ones who haven't had abortions, so they can listen but they can't relate. Everyone tells me it was the right thing to do, but no one wants to hear that I experience doubts and regret after the fact. Doubting my decision doesn't mean that I would have the baby if I could do it over, and it certainly doesn't mean that I think the state shouldn't have let me get an abortion. So why is everyone so afraid of these feelings? Maybe for the same reason I am. Because it forces us to realize that abortion is an undervalued experience – we make the choice between life and death for our fetus, and we make the choice to either keep leading the same life, or to adjust to a huge, unexpected, life-altering change and to take on a huge, unexpected, life-altering responsibility. Yeah, it's not fair that getting pregnant can happen so easily and it's not fair that men will never experience abortion the way wimmin do so we need to be supportive of each other and listen and validate each others' feelings. I went through a phase a few months ago where I was extremely uncomfortable around my boyfriend's daughter because I was wrestling with this confusion. I tried to explain myself to him and to other friends but I felt like they didn't really get me. It made me feel very isolated and to question my own feelings. I just want to tell people that this is fucked up and for other wimmin to know that it is okay to feel this way

.....by Sasha od

★REVOLUTIONARY★
Keep your laws off our bodies!
our reproductive rights are none of your business
ABORTION & CONTRACEPTIVES ON DEMAND & ACCESSABLE
C.R.A.C.K. is unethical & eugenic!
Pregnant addicts need programs not incarceration
PRO-MOTHER AND PRO-CHOICE
code of ethics #12

linocut by meredith

Cris

I was 22 when I got pregnant and my kid's dad was also 22. We knew each other for a few months and we were living together for a month before I got pregnant. A friend of ours had a baby and I held her. She was like this perfect little doll, five pounds, bright red lips, tiny little hands, and she was so adorable. I held her and decided I wanted to have a baby, and I got one. We didn't use condoms for two weeks and now I'm a mommy. He wanted to break up with me at the time but didn't tell me that; he told me sure, we can have a baby. I don't know what he was thinking, but after the fact he told me he wanted to break up with me at the time. It was pretty stupid. My sister told me that I always wanted to have a baby. I remember talking to a friend and we were like, yeah, we could be teenage moms, it would be cool. But it's so not cool. I was afraid of having an abortion, and my idea of it was scary. I'm really afraid of medical intervention anyway, terrified by needles, but giving birth really didn't scare me. I always thought that if I got pregnant I'd have the baby. I didn't really think I could ever give a baby up for adoption either. I had a puppy once for three weeks and I was totally devastated when I had to give it up. I didn't really have a place to live with a dog and I didn't know what to do, so I took her to the pound. I knew I couldn't carry a baby for nine months and give it up if I had this much difficulty with three weeks with a puppy. So I always knew I would keep my baby if I got pregnant. But then there was this kind of mystery of whether I actually could get pregnant; because I had condoms break and I didn't get pregnant. After I got pregnant my dad said that anytime my mom got near sperm she got pregnant.

At the time I got pregnant I decided I was having it, and I told my boyfriend he could be there or not, so he didn't want to be there, and I was really angry. I remember I had a set of chairs from a junk shop that I was going to put new seats on them. I smashed one against the wall and he changed his mind. He wanted me to have an abortion, and I told him before that I was going to have it if I got pregnant. So he stayed instead. One thing that was hard was that I went to Planned Parenthood for information and once I told them I was going to have it they had nothing to help me. They didn't try to counsel me which I think is unfortunate, though I don't think they could have changed my mind. But I think there should have been something, information about pre-natal services, financial assistance, anything. I felt really lost and lonely being pregnant and lonely, because he didn't want me to have it. I had one friend, whose baby I had held, but her situation wasn't really great, we didn't hang out much. My boyfriend and I moved to Oregon just a couple months after her baby was born, but I did meet people there through

my child- birth class. After the baby was born, there was a new mom support group that was great to be around. I really wanted to stay home with my kid, and I did until my boyfriend left when our kid was three years old. Maybe it would have worked better being young if I was in a committed relationship. The only reason we stayed together was because we had a kid. We stayed together for four years from the time he wanted to break up with me. Finally I had to ask him to leave. He didn't want to be here and it wasn't fair to any of us. I t was really lonely. When we came back to Pittsburgh we met more people with kids. I was way too young I think. Now I am thirty and some of my friends have children the same age as my kid, but they are almost ten years older than me, and they are still young. I think it would have helped both of us if I had waited ten years to have a child. This woman at a summer camp my dad works at saw my kid kicking me under the table and said we were just like brother and sister, we pick on each other, and it's totally true that we are growing up together.

There are so many things I wanted to do with my life that are harder, even things like riding my bike everyday. I can't do that because I need to get him to school and get to work and I only have a certain amount of time to do that in. I don't have enough time to ride my bike everyday. I would have gone back to school if I hadn't gotten pregnant, and I want to go to school but it really changes everything. I can't go to school and be totally free and not have responsibility. I can't ever put aside my responsibility to my kid. It's not like having a cat I can leave at home. I am totally different now, I feel so much older than other people my age, but in other ways I still feel twenty- three. I think my perspective has changed in relation to child- raising. Once you have a child your daily life changes. Things change like people speeding down my street in cars bothers me, because I don't want my kid to get hurt riding a bike there. I get really worked up about issues relating to parenting. Someone recently had a two year old and was taking fertility drugs- it just seems ridiculous, it's not like she needed drugs to get pregnant. I don't think I would have gotten as worked up if I didn't have a kid. The issues change, what you think about. Even going on vacation, priorities change. We went to Europe and visited all the different playgrounds. My friend just went on a trip and said she was saving visiting certain things for when she goes with her child. Everything gets related to your kid and you can't help it. It's a huge responsibility.

I've tried to tell people who were pregnant and deciding what to do what being a parent means, and it's difficult, you just can't understand until you do it. At that point, it's too late. I don't know if there are things you can say to prepare people for the experience. I think trying to talk to people before they get pregnant would be the most effective. I know when I was babysitting a lot I realized I wasn't prepared to be a mother. It was nice to have a break and go home at the end of the day. I think it's important for

people to understand that every second of your life is going to be devoted to someone else. For so long I couldn't even use the bathroom without worrying about where my son was, and it's hard to have a conversation without being distracted because I'm used to having half my attention focused on him. Your space is totally connected to your child's space. I think people have different experiences, some people can have their children in daycare and everything but I'm not one of those people. You won't know how you'll feel until you have a child.

Before people decide to have a kid I think it would help to write down a list of all your life dreams and think about which ones you need to do before having a kid. There are tons of things you can do with a kid, but it changes everything so much and makes a lot of things harder. Traveling around the world sleeping on the ground is something easier to do without a kid. You may have to wait ten years to have a kid, and that doesn't mean that you'll be that old if you wait until you are 28 instead of 18 or 32 instead of 22. It's not that much time, but there are so many things I could have given to my son if I had been older. If I had a better source of income it would be better. I have to work an $8/hour job to support my kid because I never went to school. If I was older I could have figured out some ways to make money without going to school or something; I didn't figure out what I was doing with my life. One of my friends was able to travel all around Central America before she had her child, so she learned Spanish. Once she had a child, she was able to start a Spanish immersion school and that has been really fabulous. I never had the opportunity to try to find something like that for myself. I know some people never figure out what they want to do. Now what I am doing is being a mom, and what I want to do is to stay home and home-school him, but because I am a single mom it's not a reality. I've gotten more conservative in some ways, in terms of parenting; I feel like there is a reason it takes two people to raise a child, because you really need help, and shouldn't have to rely on daycare all the time. Your kid needs you, so one person can be at home with the child and the other can be working. I think it would be easier being a single mom if you have some finances to be able to stay at home with your child, and maybe the longer that you wait the more stable you could be and more resources you could have.

A lot of my friends have kids. When my son is with his father, I feel weird like I don't know what to do with my friends. I always talk about my kid, so when I talk about them with my friends with children they talk about their kids, but my friends who don't can't relate or understand. I spend my whole life taking care of my kid, and my life is arranged around that. My life is totally different from people who don't have kids. So it's odd because I don't know who I am without him. I wasn't that young, like a teenager, but I definitely feel that I was too young. I do enjoy having the kids' perspective. I remember

when I was a kid and what I wanted, and feel that I can relate to what my kid wants. My entire life is intertwined with him and in some ways is really great, and in other ways it's difficult. I don't have a lot of adult conversations except when our kids are around. I don't really know what I would be doing with my life if I didn't have a kid. I feel kind of separated from the world of going out. I feel that I want to experience a lot of things, but my son and I both really need to get a lot of sleep too. I need to wait longer to do more things I want to do. Having two adults around to take care of the kid would be much easier though, too.

I had met my son's father when I was working at a summer camp and I had just ended a relationship that was pretty destructive. I feel that I should have figured out more about how to have a good relationship before having a kid. I haven't dated anyone since we broke up, and I feel that the only person I've had a really good relationship with is my kid. It's hard for me to meet people who don't have kids, or people to date. People who are my age aren't ready to be a father and people older than me think I'm too young. My son deserves to have a man around, he wants to have a dad. After we split up, my son would stay with his father sometimes in the weeknights, but when he started seeing his current wife things started changing. It was difficult because I had to keep changing my work schedule around him, and it's hard to balance all these things. This summer my son will be seeing his dad every weekend, so that's going to be good. It's hard to figure out how to make time to date or how. I wouldn't want my son to be around at first, but that leaves just the time when he's asleep. I do really enjoy having a kid, he's really great, totally fun. If I had it to do over again, and I could still have my son, whom I totally love, the way he is, I would wait ten years to have him. I feel I romanticized having a kid and being a single mom, but I do think there is a lot of growing up that needs to happen first. In some ways there is no way to be fully prepared, and there may never be a perfect time. Maybe you're always too young to have a kid, unless you set aside a plan and really intentionally follow it. I know I always wanted to be a mom, even though I also didn't really know what it meant to be a mother. But ever since I started having sex, I was prepared and knew that if I got pregnant I'd keep it.

- Cris

Judith Krain

It was 1959 and I was an extremely young 19-year-old. I was pregnant and could not tell a soul except the man involved. He wanted no part of it but at least gave me the $500 for an illegal abortion and then I was on my own. I can't remember how I made contact, but I clearly remember driving to the New Jersey Palisades to a very exclusive apartment building overlooking the Hudson. The apartment was devoid of furniture but for a dining room table covered by a dirty sheet. I was told to remove everything from the waist down except my skirt. I got up on the table and without benefit of anesthesia I was poked and prodded with what looked like medieval instruments of torture. A man held his hand over my mouth so that I would not scream. All the while, the woman who performed the abortion was humming "Try a Little Tenderness." Strange thing to remember, huh? She packed me full with gauze ribbon and told me I could remove it in 48 hours. I left, got into my car and drove 90 miles to spend the weekend in the country with my family. At several points I had to pull off the side of the road because of pain, dizziness and nausea. I lied to my mother...a stupid lie that she chose to believe. The only emotion I felt during this experience was fear and the only emotion afterwards was relief. One thing I know for certain is that I don't want anyone to have to experience the fear and loneliness that I did. Today, I am the Vice President and Treasurer of the Women's Reproductive Rights Assistance Project (WRRAP). We are a group of volunteers who raise money to give financial grants to poor women and girls across the nation who are otherwise unable to afford the choice of emergency contraception or a safe and legal abortion.

My Mifepristone* Journal

* also known as RU-486

by F. Pea

Friday (MY BIRTHDAY)

1:15 PM ARRIVED AT CLINIC + SIGNED IN.

2:00 PM HAD AN ULTRASOUND + PELVIC EXAM. PREGNANCY DETERMINED TO BE 5 WEEKS. DR M. WAS QUITE NICE + SENT GREETINGS TO MY REGULAR DOC.

2:30 PM BLOODWORK. I'M A-POSITIVE.

3:00 PM AFTER TALKING WITH THE DOC, TOOK 200 mg OF MIFEPRISTONE IN HIS PRESENCE.

GOT HOME AROUND 4 PM.

HAD MILD CRAMPS ALL EVENING

* mifepristone terminates the pregnancy. on sunday I have to take misoprostil to expel the contents of my uterus.

Saturday

9:00 AM WOKE UP + ATE BREAKFAST - GRANOLA W/ SOY MILK AND TEA. WENT TO THE FARMERS' MARKET + THEN STOPPED BY WORK FOR AROUND A HALF HOUR TO DO SOME STUFF I FORGOT ABOUT YESTERDAY.

FEELING SCATTERBRAINED + TIRED, BUT OTHERWISE OKAY.

AT THE MARKET I BOUGHT FLOWERS + CHATTED W/ APRIL.

1:30 PM VEGGIE BEANIE-WEENIES FOR LUNCH. FEELING CRAMPY. P. CLEANED THE WHOLE HOUSE + WENT TO WORK. I SEWED FOR A WHILE - I'M MAKING A GIANT RED CLOTH MENSTRUAL CUSHION TO BLEED ALL OVER.

4:00 PM HAD LOTS OF CRAMPS + FELT NAUSEOUS. SMOKED A SMALL BOWL + WATCHED 'THE LION, THE WITCH + THE WARDROBE.'

6:00 PM TOOK A SHORT WALK TO MEET P. FOR TEA AT THE CAFE. MANY BIRDS ARE IN THE BACKYARD: YELLOW FINCHES, CARDINALS, CHICKADEES + A GREEN HUMMINGBIRD.

9:00 PM TINA CAME OVER. WE SMOKED A LITTLE MORE FOR MY CRAMPS + WORKED ON THE ZINE A BIT. P. CAME HOME AROUND 10 + WE WATCHED 'EAT A BOWL OF TEA.'

Sunday

7:45 AM WOKE UP. ATE TOAST W/JAM, HAD SOME TEA. AT 8 AM TOOK ONE IBUPROFEN (800 mg) W/ORANGE JUICE. LISTENED TO THE RADIO + READ THE PAPER.

8:30 AM BRUSHED MY TEETH + PEED. LAID DOWN IN BED + INSERTED 4 MISOPROSTIL VAGINALLY.

TIPS: DON'T DRINK OJ! POOP FIRST!

9:00 AM POOPED. I REALLY HOPE THE PILLS DIDN'T COME OUT!

9:20 AM BARFED. SHOULD NOT HAVE DRUNK OJ. FELT A BIT BETTER. VERY COLD. STILL POOPING. BAD CRAMPS + CHILLS. WENT TO SLEEP FOR A WHILE.

11:00 AM WOKE UP TO PEE. SPOTTING BLOOD - BUT NO REAL BLEEDING LIKE I'M SUPPOSED TO HAVE. NO NAUSEA OR CHILLS; CRAMPS ARE STRONG, BUT NOT AS PAINFUL AS BEFORE.

11:20 AM LEIGH FROM PLANNED PARENTHOOD CALLED TO CHECK ON ME. I WAS WORRIED THAT THE MISOPROSTIL HAD SLIPPED OUT ON THE TOILET. SHE SUGGESTED I FEEL AROUND MY VAGINA TO CHECK IF THEY'RE STILL THERE. THEY SEEMED TO BE, THOUGH I WASN'T SURE I COULD FEEL ALL FOUR PILLS.

12:00 PM TRIED TO DO SOME YOGA BUT I WAS TOO DISTRACTED. IT'S RAINING NOW. I WISH THE RAIN WOULD WASH ALL THIS SHIT AWAY.

12:15 PM BLEEDING VERY LIGHT BUT REGULAR. CRAMPS ARE GETTING PRETTY BAD. THE CATS SEEM WORRIED ABOUT MY PATHETIC WHIMPERING.

12:40 PM TOOK A TYLENOL W/CODEINE. LIGHT BLEEDING. WATCHED SOME 'ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS.'

2:00 PM I AM REALLY STARTING TO DESPAIR. THE CRAMPS ARE HORRENDOUS, BUT THE HEAVY BLEEDING JUST ISN'T HAPPENING. I AM BLEEDING, BUT IT'S VERY LIGHT. AAARHH! I DON'T WANT TO GO THROUGH THIS AGAIN! I KNOW I MUST RELAX, BUT I'M SO WORRIED + DISTRACTED.

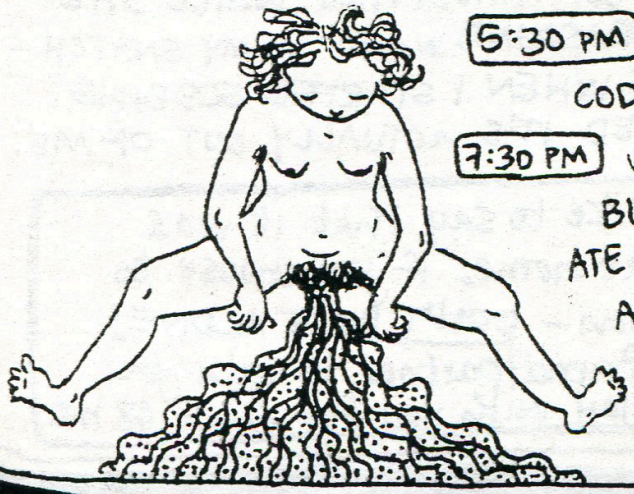
2:30 PM P. WENT TO THE STORE + GOT LOTS OF NICE THINGS. I HAD A DELICIOUS CHEESE SANDWICH ON FRESH BREAD + AM NOW MUNCHING RED GRAPES + SIPPING LOVELY VERMONT APPLE JUICE. HE IS THE MOST EXCELLENT! I'VE DECIDED TO JUST RELAX AND QUIT WORRYING. IT SEEMS FAR BETTER THAN STRESSING OUT.

3:30 PM. took another codeine

4:30 PM. called P. P. - cramps are very severe.

4:40 PM. took IBUPROFEN + got in tub.

* this is where P. took over the journal b/c i was in too much pain to write.



5:30 PM TOOK ANOTHER CODEINE + WENT TO BED.

7:30 PM WOKE UP - CRAMPS NOT AS BAD, BUT BLEEDING IS STILL SO LIGHT! ATE SALAD + SCRAMBLED EGGS. WATCHED A MOVIE W/P. - 'IRON + SILK.'

11:30 PM BED. BLEEDING + CRAMPS BOTH LIGHT.

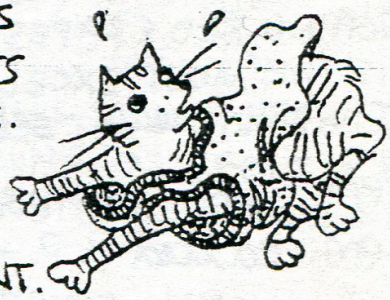
Monday

8:30 AM GOT UP. NO CRAMPS. LIGHT BLEEDING. GRANOLA, TEA + GRAPE JUICE FOR BREAKFAST.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DO THIS AGAIN! I DON'T THINK I CAN FACE THE DAY.

12:00 PM LIGHT TO MODERATE BLEEDING + CRAMPS. REPORTED TO P.P. W/ DETAILS. THEY SCHEDULED ME FOR AN ULTRASOUND AT 5 PM TO CHECK OUT WHAT HAPPENED. IT WAS HARD TO KEEP FROM CRYING ON THE PHONE WITH THEM. MISO SOUP W/ TOFU FOR LUNCH.

2:00 PM TOOK A SHORT WALK TO THE VIDEO STORE TO REPLENISH MY VIEWING. CHATTED W/ MIKE - I FELT LIKE I WAS ACTING SECRETIVE WHEN HE ASKED WAS I FEELING OKAY. CAME HOME + TRIED TO DRESS THE CATS IN CLOTHES BUT THEY WANTED NO PARTS OF IT. CRAMPS + BLEEDING MODERATE. DID A LITTLE YOGA TO RELAX.



5:00 PM WENT TO P.P. THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY RECORD OF THE APPOINTMENT. I SAW THE DOC + FINALLY HAD AN ULTRASOUND AROUND 6 PM. NO FETUS! I WAS SO RELIEVED, SO EMOTIONAL + STRESSED OUT. THE DOC GRILLED ME ON MY CHOICE OF CONTRACEPTION WHILE SHE HAD ME ON MY BACK WITH AN ULTRASOUND WAND IN MY SNATCH - THOUGH SHE DID FINALLY LAY OFF WHEN I STARTED SOBBING. BUT IT'S OVER!!! I AM SO RELIEVED IT'S ACTUALLY OUT OF ME.

* looking back at this, I'd like to say that it was great to be able to do it at home. If you choose to ever have a medical abortion - **DON'T** DO IT ALONE! You will need a supportive friend/partner to take you to all clinic visits, and to stay with you for about 48 hrs.